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ABSTRACT

In this paper four articles on school desegregation and equal educational opportunity are reviewed. The articles, which appeared in the November 1977 issue of "Phi Delta Kappan", deal both with specific community experiences (Boston and Dallas) and with more general issues, such as behavior patterns affecting desegregation and court mandated citizen participation in the desegregation process. Salient features of each article reviewed are mentioned. It is suggested that these articles may serve as a starting point for discussion of the problems facing desegregating schools in the 1970's. (Author/GC)

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Current Thinking on Desegregation

Constancia Warren*

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The November 1977 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* should be of interest both to educators in the specific area of school desegregation and to those in the more general area of equal educational opportunity. The theme of the issue is "Making Desegregation Work," and included in it are four articles on this topic. The issue is introduced by an editorial which describes briefly the difficulties inherent in desegregating large urban school systems in the North.

The first two articles describe the magnet school programs that were introduced to bring desegregation to Boston and Dallas. Charles McMillan's thoughtful article on Boston is the more useful of the two in its discussion of the problems Boston faces, while Daniel Levine and Nolan Estes' article on Dallas gives the reader a sense of the broad possibilities available to those undertaking magnet school programs.

Magnet Education — Boston

Boston's desegregation experience is the subject of Charles McMillan's article, "Magnet Education in Boston." In his closing remarks, McMillan gives us his forecast of school integration in the 1980s: "School integration . . . if it is to happen at all in dozens of American cities, will need to be metropolitan, and as the law now stands, it will need to be voluntary." (p. 163)

While the legal status of metropolitan desegregation plans is uncertain at best, the Federal District Courts have taken an increasingly aggressive stance on "voluntary" desegregation plans through the use of the magnet school concept. Magnet schools differ from other schools in that, ideally, the curricula for all the students revolve around a special theme, such as the arts or the sciences. The schools are set up in this way in order to attract students from different ethnic backgrounds.[1]

Boston, Dallas, Houston, Minneapolis, Portland, Saint Louis, and Los Angeles are among the cities where the courts have mandated the magnet school mechanism. The Carter administration has been so encouraged by progress in this area that it has recommended that the amount of funds set aside for magnet schools by the Emergency School Assistance Act be more than doubled — from $8 million last year to $20 million this year (fiscal year 1977).

McMillan is less than fully optimistic about the future of the voluntary approach, both in Boston and elsewhere. While the magnet school options, mandated in the desegregated districts by the Federal District Court Judge, W. Arthur Garrity, have attracted increasing enrollment in Boston's magnet schools, and while attendance rates are better at magnet schools than nonmagnet schools, the program is only quasi-voluntary and relies heavily on the muscle of the courts. Each spring parents in the magnet districts are supplied with descriptions of the various options available for their child, and they are given the choice of whether they would like to send their child to a magnet school or a nonmagnet school in their local desegregated district. If they choose the magnet school option, they can further specify which school. "In this context the opportunity to choose a school with a sound reputation, with a specialized 'theme' (no matter how unsophisticated), and with other children who have voluntarily enrolled takes on enlarged value." (p. 159)

In order to try to determine why certain schools were chosen over others, McMillan examined the factors contributing to the desirability of a school. In a list of nine qualities, those peculiar to magnet schools — attractive learning themes and teaching styles — rank eighth and ninth in importance. The more important factors in choosing a school included the location of the school in a safe neighborhood; the condition of the school building, whether new or renovated; the reputation of the school for providing quality education, the perception of the faculty and administrators as highly talented; and the relationships many of these schools have developed with universities, cultural agencies, and/or businesses.

Many of Boston's magnet schools are not really magnets — they are simply good schools. Still, the one school that was designated a traditional "academics-plus" school was able to attract a fully integrated student body. This was an elementary school in an identifiably black neighborhood. It

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[1] The author is working on a more extensive article on magnet schools which will appear in a later issue of this newsletter.

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filled to capacity, which indicates that the use of a teaching style magnet may be effective if fully implemented. Many of the magnet schools, however, have never developed their court-given approaches because they lack the commitment to their assigned themes and the support necessary to achieve these changes.

Administrative backing, so necessary for the successful implementation of innovations, has been conspicuously absent. The key support of the Boston School Committee and of the central school administration has not been forthcoming. What we have seen is a large investment of energy on the part of parents, teachers, school administrators, universities, businesses, and cultural groups, as well as financial and organizational support from the Massachusetts Department of Education. Unless the school administration changes its position and endorses the magnet approach as an integral and legitimate part of the Boston school system, there is considerable fear that once the court's supervision is withdrawn, the energy of the others will be exhausted. Magnet schools are expensive because of the cost of new programs and the need for curriculum specialists to develop and institutionalize the distinctive "themes" which are at the base of a magnet school's appeal. Even with the support of the Boston School Committee (which is unlikely in the foreseeable future), the financial problem would remain.

Magnet Education — Dallas

The Dallas Independent School District is more fortunate. Its magnet school program has been acclaimed as one of the most successful in the country. It was developed with the support of a court order, based on consultation with educators and community leaders, and with the considerable economic resources of an increasingly affluent business center that sees a strong and vital school system as part of its economic appeal to new industry. In this context, the success in Dallas seems less astounding and more difficult to replicate in the troubled urban centers of the North. In their article, "Desegregation and Educational Reconstruction in the Dallas Public Schools," Daniel U. Levine and Superintendent of Schools Nolan Estes describe the variety of programs Dallas has undertaken both to comply with a court order to desegregate and to vitalize its school system. The court order gave the city the necessary authority to successfully prod otherwise resistant bureaucrats.

Estes and Levine recognize the dependence of the Dallas program on community cooperation and support. The part of their article headed "Business and Community Involvement" is a virtual catalog of options for including leaders outside the educational arena; and their enumeration of the desegregation-stimulated magnet options is similarly useful in presenting a wide range of alternatives available to magnet school proponents. Despite their special circumstances, the Dallas innovations may provide useful models for change on a less dramatic scale in other communities.

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The GAC/EEO Mandate

The General Assistance Center on Equal Educational Opportunity (GAC/EEO) is a service organization funded by the Department of HEW under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act. It is under a contract awarded and monitored by the Office of Education.

The mandate of the GAC/EEO is to give technical assistance to school districts in the region which are dealing with problems related to the elimination of discrimination resulting from racism and/or sexism. Representatives of the GAC provide service to a district after a written request for specific assistance has been received. The Director of the GAC then assigns specialists in that area to work in cooperation with district personnel. All service is contingent upon the demonstration of "good faith" by the district.

Although the GAC is funded by the federal government, as an independent organization it provides nonjudgmental consultation in all educational areas related to desegregation. The General Assistance Center must, however, keep the federal program officers abreast of the type of service supplied to a district and the reasons for the success or failure of each intervention. It is important for district personnel to realize that the GAC is not able to make legal determinations and does not in any way review district utilization of federal funding.

The GAC works with district personnel to establish and implement programs, to institute on-going evaluation techniques which permit continuous program revision, and to help school personnel develop the necessary competencies for dealing with the needs of school desegregation in the district. GAC specialists have worked with districts in developing nonracist, nonsexist curricula; in improving school community relations; in planning for more equitable teacher and pupil assignments; and in revising administrative structures. The GAC remains available for consultation to the school district, but the long-range goal of the General Assistance Center is to help school districts assess their own needs and to prescribe and implement the necessary activities to meet those needs.

In order to serve as many districts as possible, the GAC tries to determine common needs and hold workshops or conferences which address the problems. These group sessions encourage school districts to create communication networks as well as provide an opportunity to work with GAC specialists.

Should districts have problems in areas where the GAC has no specialist on staff, there are numerous consultants available. What the GAC/EEO does is to try to offer school districts information and technical assistance so that they may provide their students with the best possible equal educational opportunities.

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Behavior Patterns and Desegregation

Rounding out the section on "Making Desegregation Work" are two articles, one by Barbara Love on "Desegregation in Your School: Behavior Patterns That Get in the Way," and another by Lila Carol on "Court-Mandated Citizen Participation in School Desegregation." Love's article provides "a lens through which teachers and administrators may view a variety of individuals and institutional practices related to desegregation." (168) The behavior patterns, some subtle and some not so subtle, convey a message to minority students that, despite formal indications to the contrary, they are seen as inferior and incapable of performing as well academically and otherwise as nonminority students. Other practices withhold important support for the achievement of minority students. Some of Love's areas of concern are (1) low expectations for the academic performance of minority children, (2) inappropriate instructional materials in a multicultural setting, (3) poor interpersonal relationships between teachers and minority students, (4) biased counseling practices on the part of teachers and principals as well as guidance counselors, and (5) bias in the administration of discipline. In each of the areas she discusses, Love gives examples and indications of suspect behaviors, saying that in some cases the identification of the problem will immediately suggest the solution; while in others, collaborative problem-solving processes including teachers, students, parents, and administrators may be the mechanism required to correct the negative learning atmosphere created by the behaviors in question.

Court-Mandated Citizen Participation

Since the mandate for maximum community participation in the poverty programs of the 1960s, parent and community groups have become involved in different facets of education. Indeed, the magnet school concept seeks to institutionalize one form of parental involvement — that of choosing the school (and hence the curriculum content and/or teaching approach to be used) to which to send their child. Another form of community participation now on the rise is the use of court-mandated citizen monitoring groups in desegregating districts. In discussing the use of such groups in court-order desegregation, Lila Carol points out the major difficulty for such committees is defining precisely how they are to function. Some judges have been more specific than others in the delineation of the responsibility these groups will have in the implementation of desegregation, assigning them the tasks of coordinating community agency participation in the desegregation process, educating the community as to the requirements of the desegregation plan and the services of the school system, and serving as a monitoring unit to oversee the implementation of desegregation. Even these "specific" tasks leave considerable room for interpretation, and Carol notes that the success of such court-ordered monitoring groups generally depends on:

> (1) the manner in which the presiding judge initiates and attends to the matters assigned to the citizen groups; (2) how the citizen group assumes its responsibility, the clarity with which it understands its mission, and the manner in which it expands its capabilities; (3) the attitudes and degree of cooperation from school officials and school employees; and (4) the responses of the community to the monitoring commission. [173]

As with other forms of citizen participation in education that have developed since the 1960s, the monitoring committees are potentially useful in making the school more responsive to local needs and in providing the school with badly needed community support.

While the four articles differ in focus and approach, all are thought-provoking and may serve as a starting point for useful discussions of the problems facing desegregating schools in the 1970s.

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Activities and Resources

The General Assistance Center for Equal Educational Opportunity (GAC/EEO) Title IX team provides technical assistance to schools. Title IX, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of 1972, has to do with regulations regarding sex discrimination. The GAC Title IX team helps to raise the consciousness of school personnel concerning sexist practices in the schools and their effect on students, and assists schools in implementing Title IX guidelines. The team also helps schools to better understand the legal aspects of the Title IX regulations and the implications they have for educational change.

The GAC has developed two videotapes which can be purchased at cost for use by school districts: Title IX — *Implementation of the Law* and *Nonsexist Curriculum*. At the request of school districts, the Title IX team will run conferences and workshops. Several conference activities have taken place this fall. Two of the recent ones included a workshop on "Male and Female: Analysis of Sex Role Differentiation in the Classroom" for the five-school district conference sponsored by the educators of the Finger Lakes at Seneca Falls, N.Y., and Title IX Implementation Workshop for the Superintendent's Day Conference in Washingtonville, N.Y.

For further information, contact Natalie Robbins, 212-678-3348.

NIE Compensatory Education Study

The National Institute of Education (NIE) is publishing a series of six reports, entitled *The Compensatory Education Study*, through the fall of 1977 as a result of a mandate in the Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments (ESEA) of 1974. The purpose of these reports is to provide Congress with more up-to-date and accurate information during its future consideration of legislation.

The first report, issued in July, describes the compensatory education services provided by a cross section of the 14,000 school districts that receive Title I funds. Title I funds are intended to provide compensatory education services to educationally disadvantaged children; i.e., children who are low-achieving and/or poor. Thus, funds can be used both for instructional programs and for auxiliary services such as counseling and health care.

The Title I funds are channeled through local agencies. School districts, therefore, have a great deal of flexibility in determining how their programs will be set up. In practice this means that the criteria for selecting participants varies from district to district as do the services and the way in which they are provided. NIE found that variations in services provided related to the size of the districts' grants; e.g., in districts with larger grants, children were more likely to receive compensatory instruction outside of their regular classrooms.

In the 90 percent of United States school districts that receive Title I funds, the services go primarily to elementary school students. A small number of secondary school students and private school students also are served. Nationwide, 54 percent of the students receiving compensatory education are white and 46 percent belong to minority groups. This compares with an overall white enrollment of 75 percent and an overall minority enrollment of 25 percent.

The report findings show that the emphasis in Title I programs is on the basic skills areas of reading, language arts, and mathematics with a very small proportion of the funds spent on auxiliary services. The compensatory education instruction is provided in small classes of from 9 to 12 students. Although an attempt is made to individualize the instruction, few districts offer totally individualized instruction. The students spend an average of 5½ hours per week in the program. The teachers that work with the program tend to be highly qualified with a great number having graduate training beyond a B.A. degree. In general, Title I instruction appears to make a distinct contribution to the learning experience of the students.